

VZCZCXRO5028
PP RUEHDBU RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHIL #1834 1141311
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 241311Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8673
INFO RUEHAH/AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT PRIORITY 2300
RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA PRIORITY 0124
RUEHEK/AMEMBASSY BISHKEK PRIORITY 4163
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 1284
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 2052
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE PRIORITY
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 7051
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU PRIORITY 8192
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0817
RUEHNT/AMEMBASSY TASHKENT PRIORITY 3033
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 5729
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 2129
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 0433
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 2219
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RHWSMRC/USCINCCENT MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 001834

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/24/2017

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: CHIEF JUSTICE CONTROVERSY CONTINUES: THE HEARINGS

REF: A. ISLAMABAD 1783

[1](#)B. AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Charge d'Affairs a.i. Peter W. Bodde, Reasons 1.4 (b) a
nd (d)

[1](#)1. (U) On April 24, both the Supreme Court and the Supreme Judicial Council considered petitions relating to the presidential reference against the Chief Justice. In the Supreme Court, Presiding Justice Muhammad Raza Khan excused himself from considering the Chief Justice's petition. Khan said he had recused himself -- despite pleas from both the Chief Justice's and the Government's attorneys not to -- because he had previously signed a restraining order against the Chief Justice.

[1](#)2. (U) Sharifuddin Pirzada, an adviser to the Prime Minister and a leading constitutional lawyer, announced he will defend President Musharraf, the primary respondent in the Chief Justice's Supreme Court petition. Earlier, Pirzada had declined to represent the government at the Supreme Judicial Council and has expressed consternation over the way the President handled the Chief Justice reference.

[1](#)3. (U) The Supreme Judicial Council also met on April 24. Counsel Aitzaz Ahsan argued against the composition of the Council and again demanded that three of the justices recuse themselves. The Council's next hearings will be May 2 and 3.

[1](#)4. (C) The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) ordered satellite television station Aaj TV to appear before PEMRA on April 25. According to PEMRA's Show Cause order and to Embassy contacts, PEMRA is accusing Aaj of overly criticizing the Government's handling of the Chief Justice controversy; PEMRA is threatening to cancel Aaj TV's broadcasting license. This apparently is the first time PEMRA has attempted to censor any reporting on the Chief Justice issue since PEMRA took GEO Television off the air for 20 minutes in early March. After that incident, both President Musharraf and Minister of Information Durrani

promised that the government would no longer censor television coverage of the controversy. (Comment: As in the earlier GEO incident, PEMRA may have acted without consulting the Government. End Comment.)

15. (U) The Additional Advocate General of the Punjab announced on April 23 that he would resign his position to protest the government's handling of the Chief Justice case.

BODDE